Cabinet Office

Guidance

Staying safe outside your home

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It is your responsibility to adopt these principles wherever possible. The government is also using these principles as the basis of discussions with businesses, unions, local government and many other stakeholders, to agree how the principles should apply in different settings to make them safer.

All of us, as customers, visitors, employees or employers need to make changes to lower the risk of transmission of the virus. The government has consulted with its scientific advisers to establish the principles that will determine these changes.

1. Keep your distance from people outside your household

Whilst recognising this will not always be possible, it is important to be aware that the risk of infection increases the closer you are to another person with the virus, and the amount of time you spend in close contact with them. Therefore, you are unlikely to be infected if you walk past another person in the street.

Public Health England recommends trying to keep two metres away from people as a precaution. However, this is not a rule and the science is complex. The key thing is to not be too close to people for more than a short period of time, as much as you can.

2. Keep your hands and face as clean as possible

Wash your hands often using soap and water, and dry them thoroughly.

Where available, use sanitiser outside your home, especially as you enter a building and after you have had contact with surfaces.

Avoid touching your face.

3. Work from home if you can

With the proper equipment and adjustments, many people can do most or all of their work from home. Your employer should support you to find reasonable adjustments to do this. However, not all jobs can be done from home. If your workplace is open and you cannot work from home, you can travel to work.

4. Avoid being face-to-face with people if they are outside your household

You are at higher risk of being directly exposed to respiratory droplets (released by talking or coughing) when you are within two metres of someone and have face-to-face contact with them. You can lower the risk of infection if you stay side-to-side rather than facing someone.

5. Reduce the number of people you spend time with in a work setting

You can lower the risks of transmission in the workplace by reducing the number of people you come into contact with regularly, where you can. Your employer can support with this (where practical) by:

- changing shift patterns and rotas to match you with the same team each time
- splitting people into smaller, contained teams

6. Avoid crowds

You can lower the risks of transmission by reducing the number of people you come into close contact with. For example, avoid peak travel times on public transport, where possible.

Businesses should also take reasonable steps to avoid people being gathered together. For example, by allowing the use of more entrances and exits, and staggering entrance and exit, where possible.

7. If you have to travel (for example, to work or school), think about how and when you travel

To reduce demand on the public transport network, you should walk or cycle wherever possible. If you have to use public transport, you should try to avoid peak times.

Employers should consider staggering working hours, expanding bicycle storage facilities, providing changing facilities and providing car parking.

8. Wash your clothes regularly

There is some evidence that the virus can stay on fabrics for a few days, although usually it is shorter. Therefore, if you are working with people outside your household, wash your clothes regularly.

Changing clothes in workplaces should only be considered where there is a high risk of infection or there are highly vulnerable people, such as in a care home. If you need to change your clothes, avoid crowding into a changing room.

9. Keep indoor places well ventilated

Evidence suggests that the virus is less likely to be passed on in well-ventilated buildings and outdoors.

In good weather, try to leave windows and doors open in areas where people from different households come into contact, or move activity outdoors if you can.

Use external extractor fans to keep spaces well ventilated and make sure that ventilation systems are set to maximise the air flow rate.

Heating and cooling systems can be used at their normal temperature settings.

10. Face coverings

If you can, wear a face covering in enclosed public spaces where social distancing isn't possible and where you will come into contact with people you do not normally meet. This is most relevant for short periods indoors in crowded areas, for example, on public transport or in some shops. You should be prepared to remove your face covering if asked to do so by police officers and staff for the purposes of identification.

Evidence suggests that wearing a face covering does not protect you. However, if you are infected but have not yet developed symptoms, it may provide some protection for others you come into close contact with.

Face coverings do not replace social distancing. If you have symptoms of COVID-19 (cough, and/or high temperature, and/or loss of, or change in, your normal sense of smell or taste - anosmia), you and your household must isolate at home: wearing a face covering does not change this. You should arrange to have a test to see if you have COVID-19.

A face covering is not the same as the surgical masks or respirators used by healthcare and other workers as part of personal protective equipment. These should continue to be reserved for those who need them to protect against risks in their workplace, such as health and care workers, and those in industrial settings, like those exposed to dust hazards.

Face coverings should not be used by children under the age of 2 or those who may find it difficult to manage them correctly. For example, primary age children unassisted, or those with respiratory conditions.

It is important to use face coverings properly and wash your hands before putting them on and taking them off.

You can make face-coverings at home. The key thing is it should cover the mouth and nose.

11. When at work, follow the advice given to you by your employer

Employers have a duty to assess and manage risks to your safety in the workplace. The government has issued guidance for employers and businesses on coronavirus. This includes guidance on how to make adjustments to your workplace to help you maintain social distancing.

It also includes guidance on hygiene, as evidence suggests that the virus can exist for up to 72 hours on surfaces. Therefore, frequent cleaning is particularly important for communal surfaces like:

- door handles
- lift buttons
- communal areas like bathrooms
- kitchens
- tea points

You can see the guidance for employers and businesses on coronavirus on gov.uk and can ask your employer if you have questions.

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